Contamination of water sources

567. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether West Bengal is worst hit by arsenic and flouride contamination of drinking water sources;

(b) the measures taken by Government to assist the State Government to solve this problem; and

(c) the fund allocated or proposed to be allocated for the said purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Out of 341 Nos. of blocks in 18 districts in the State of West Bengal, 79 blocks in 8 districts and 45 blocks in 9 districts are affected by the problem of arsenic and fluoride contamination in ground water respectively.

(b) and (c) Rural drinking water is a State subject. Government of India extends financial and technical assistance to States for supply of safe drinking water in rural areas through a Centrally Sponsored Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). Funds amounting to Rs. 63.95 crore have been released to West Bengal Government so far during the current year under ARWSP. 15% of ARWSP funds have been exclusively earmarked for Sub Mission project for tackling water quality problems. With effect from 01.04.1998, the power to sanction Sub Mission projects have been delegated to States. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), under the Ministry of Water Resources has also constructed 65 exploratory tubewells in four arsenic affected districts to delineate arsenic free aquifer zones. Successful wells have been handed over to State Government for use. Assistance of Rs. 12.02 lakhs for artificial recharge scheme and Rs. 21.00 lakhs in connection with R & D scheme has been provided by CGWB/Ministry of Water Resources. One mobile laboratory van with inbuilt equipment for instant analysis of arsenic rich ground water has also been made available to the State.

Division of Water Resources between India and Bangladesh

568. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether recently an Indian delegation had visited Bangladesh and held talks with Bangladesh authorities about division of water resources between the two countries;

(b) if so, the outcome of the talks, particularly about division of the water of Ganga, Tista, Monu, Khowai, Awadhkumari, Dharala, Muhari and Gomati rivers; and

(c) the details of the projects/dams/canals proposed to be built on those eight rivers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the 7th meeting of Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) at Secretary level on sharing of waters of Teesta and other common rivers was held at Dhaka on 14th and 15th September, 2004. Discussion were mainly held on sharing of Teesta waters. During the meeting, it was decided that the Joint Technical Groups (JTG) which had been constituted earlier during the 6th meeting of JCE, may hold meetings again and make efforts to further narrow the gaps on the pending issues. Accordingly the 3rd meeting of JTG was held at New Delhi on 9th and 10th November, 2004 wherein it was decided to continue the discussions further.

No discussions took place on other common rivers namely Manu, Khowai, Dudhkumar, Dharala, Muhuri and Gumti. River Ganga is not covered under the talks by JCE as there already exists a Treaty on sharing of Ganga/Ganges Waters which was entered between India and Bangladesh in December, 1996.

(c) Does not arise.

Interlinking of Rivers

569. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any initiative has been taken on the programmes of interlinking of rivers in the greater interest of the country; and

(b) if so, the status of the progress?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) yes, Sir. Two proposals for interlinking of rivers which have attracted considerable attention were given by Dr. K. L. Rao in 1972 and Captain Dastur in 1977. These proposals were not found techno-economically viable. Later, the Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR) (erstwhile Ministry of Irrigation) and Central Water Commission (CWC) formulated a National Perspective Plan